

The election eye . . .

Idaho GOP stresses hard conservatism

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The Idaho Republican Convention at Boise last weekend, as expected, took a hardline conservative position on its platform and resolutions, although not as strong as in past years.

Perhaps the resolutions and platform were as important in what they didn't include as to what they did. The Republicans did show far more enthusiasm, organization and even rivaled in fun that of the Democrats of two weeks earlier. The attendance of 600 was about double that of the Democrats.

Idaho Republican Chairman Dennis M. Olsen, Idaho Falls attorney, ran a smooth production, so to speak, and the congenial Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt and Louise Shadduck, executive secretary of the Idaho Forestry Association, who alternated as permanent chairmen, injected enough humor that it kept delegates from taking themselves too seriously. This is something that has been lacking in recent Republican state conventions.

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Perhaps the two most important issues they ignored were not taking a stand on the military draft and on the Equal Rights Amendment. It would have been an excellent opportunity to have challenged Democrats, who opposed presidential favoring of the military draft and who also endorsed the ERA.

Yes, there were a few of the so-called "far right" delegates on hand, but they were consistently outvoted by more moderate colleagues on a number of key issues. This is the reverse of Republican conventions of recent years.

Aside from two or three speakers who showed some emotionalism on family and federal governmental issues, debate were generally carried out on points of facts and philosophy. This also is a departure from previous conventions.

Democrat U.S. Sen. Frank Church appeared the focal target, as can be expected, but the Republicans also expressed confidence in victories on the entire ballot, including that of president.

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A-8

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After a brisk floor fight on semantics, Republicans gave backing to nuclear reactor development by private utilities rather than the federal government, and also full support of the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion that would turn ownership of unreserved public domain lands from the federal government to states.

Among the more important resolutions were beefing up national defense; removing tax inequities to married couples; opposition to party income tax writeoff law; advocated repeal of state inheritance tax and federal estate tax; support of the Port of Lewiston; backing of such proposals as meeting energy needs by private enterprise; review of health and welfare programs every five years to determine if they are justified; fair and equitable treatment of state employees, but not over compensation of pay comparable to that in private industry; exempt interest income from state income on personal savings; and for the government to keep its nose out of the business of the family.

Others resolutions called for a federal balanced budget and rejected a Liberty Amendment proposal that would restrict the federal government to appropriations only for programs provided in the U.S. Constitution; commendation of Idaho Republican legislators and a call for prosecuting public assistance fraud, including Medicaid.

Other resolutions asked welfare recipients to be obligated to have a lien on their property; opposed the open primary but endorsed the May presidential primary. It also favored 20 percent convention endorsement for gubernatorial and congressional candidates, a system in vogue some 20 years ago but later discarded.

Another resolution called for oversight of all federal funds dispensed through state government.

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Among the proposals killed was one calling for at least one

state representative for each county; asking the Democratic Party to comply with state primary law rather than selecting its delegates through party caucuses; another that called for the federal government not to bail out big companies, such as the auto industry; and one that the State Legislature enact a water level right not to be less than 20 feet below the 1980 water levels. The delegates also drastically revised the plank calling for a commercial sized fast breeder reactor so that it be done by private enterprise — not the government, and deleted the INEL location.

The platform, generally a controversial topic, evoked hardly any debate, maybe because many of the delegates were tired in the late afternoon after considering the resolutions and more than a third had left.

It dealt in generalities for the most part, such as calling for equality among Idahoans, support of public education with broad-based taxes, local control on governmental levels, preserving the family farm, emphasizing multiple use and local control in the matter of natural

resources and the environment, and recommending a greater percentage of the Fish and Game budget be applied to law enforcement and field management.

The platform also called for protection of water rights, study for development and construction of water storage sites to provide agricultural development, hydro electric generation, recreation, and fish and game and other uses. It opposed an water exportation to other states.

Another plank encouraged growth of commerce and industry and opposed a value added tax, encouraged innovative programs by industry to reduce pollution in every practical way, continued development of Idaho's convention and tourist industry and endorsed effort to encourage environmentally sound industries to consider development and expansion in Idaho.

So there you have it — a little bit for everybody, but each party candidate still reserves the right to reject or add whatever he likes, as has been the frequent case in the past.